



United Nations Environment Management Group

High-Level Forum of the United Nations Environment Management Group

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7, chemin de Balexert

1219 - Chatelaine

Geneva

Chairman's Discussion Paper

I: Introduction

1. The need to effectively coordinate the environmental activities undertaken by the United Nations (UN) system was identified as early as 1972 by the UN Conference on the Human Environment, and the task was subsequently entrusted to UNEP in its founding mandate (General Assembly resolution 2997 (XXVII) of 15 December 1972). This need for coordination in the field of the environment continues to be a theme that Governments attach considerable importance to, but one that has evolved and become remarkably more complex as the global conferences of the 1990s and early 2000s have added to an already multi-faceted context. This complexity stems in large part from the reality that environmental issues have become more clearly defined and more important in nearly every major sector, and now permeate the work of practically every UN organization. Furthermore, as one of the three pillars of sustainable development, the environment dimension has been adopted as part of the overarching framework of the UN's activities. This reality is reflected prominently in the UN Millennium Declaration and most recently in the Outcome Document of the 2005 World Summit, which explicitly recognizes "the need for more efficient environmental activities in the UN system, with enhanced coordination" and "improved policy advice and guidance".
2. This assessment of the need for, and complexity involved in, environmental coordination formed the backdrop for the original rationale for establishing the UN Environment Management Group (EMG), as contained in the 1998 report of the UN Secretary-General's Task Force on Environment and Human Settlements (A/49/463). The Task Force, which had been requested to review structures and arrangements through which environmental activities are carried out within the UN system, concluded that there were substantial overlaps, unrecognized linkages and gaps. What was needed was:

"A problem solving, results-oriented approach that enables the UN bodies and their partners to share information about their respective plans and activities; to inform and consult one another about proposed new initiatives; to contribute to a planning framework that permits the plans and activities of each participant to be reviewed within the framework of the whole range of activities being carried out by all participants, and to consult with each other with a view to developing an agreed set of priorities and on measures through which each participating organisation can best contribute to those priorities and achieve a more rational and cost-effective use in their respective capacities and resources".

3. This original rationale sets out a number of core functions and it clearly illustrates that EMG was envisaged as a mechanism that would first and foremost assist its member organizations in achieving a more rational and cost-effective division of labour with respect to growing and often overlapping environmental functions

and objectives. An effective EMG would allow the UN to function as a more coherent system with regard to the integration and mainstreaming of environmental issues.

4. In a concerted bid to revitalize EMG, a new EMG Director was appointed by UNEP in September 2005. He embarked on a process of consultations with various UN agencies and Multilateral Environmental Agreement (MEA) Secretariats to solicit their views on the way forward for the work of the EMG. While recognizing that some modest progress had been made in certain programme areas over the last five years, there is general consensus that EMG had not lived-up to expectations. Most UN partners feel that the real issues hampering progress has yet to be comprehensively addressed. There is also a broad agreement that an effective EMG is particularly crucial at this juncture, with Member-States and UN reform initiatives squarely focusing attention on inefficiencies arising due to lack of coordination and the value added of enhanced system-wide coherence in the field of environment --a serious challenge at a time when the UN is faced with decreasing resources to expend on such coordinating arrangements.
5. The Outcome of the 2005 World Summit specifically accorded priority to system-wide coherence and underscored the importance of environmental issues for sustainable development. Significantly, the Outcome Document specifies the need to ensure "more efficient environmental activities in the UN system, with enhanced coordination, improved policy advice and guidance, strengthened scientific knowledge, assessment and cooperation... and better integration of environmental activities in the broader sustainable development framework at the operational level, including through capacity-building". It is, therefore, essential that the UN has at its disposal an effective mechanisms which enables organizations within the system to discuss and agree on a more productive and cost-effective manner, and on common and coordinated approaches, to tackle the environmental challenges of our time.
6. It is against this background that UNEP has convened the High-Level Forum of EMG and committed itself to revitalizing EMG. The proposals set forth in this discussion paper are based on the recognition of the challenges that have hampered EMG's work during its initial years, and the conviction that EMG can only be effective if there are perceived benefits for the participating organizations. EMG must therefore, be seen as a UN system-wide mechanism, able to deliver meaningful results, build-up a solid and credible reputation of delivering solutions and engender a sense of shared ownership and commitment among its members.

II: Background

7. In considering the way forward for EMG it is useful to reflect on how environmental coordination has been dealt with in the UN system in the past, which mechanisms that are deemed to have been effective, and how UNEP's mandate for coordination in the field of the environment has evolved. It also useful to revisit the rationale and objectives of EMG as stipulated by the Task Force on Environment and Human Settlements and the broader context of efforts to improve international environmental governance.

i) Brief History of Environmental Coordination in the UN system

8. General Assembly resolution 2997 (XXVII) of 15 December 1972, while creating UNEP, established the Environment Coordinating Board (ECB) under the auspices and within the framework of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC). ECB was made up of UN Executive Heads and was chaired by UNEP's Executive Director. Its principal mandate was to ensure cooperation and coordination among all bodies concerned with the implementation of environmental programmes and to report annually to UNEP's Governing Council. ECB was supplemented by environmental focal points within each agency. In 1978, when ACC assumed the functions of the ECB, each agency appointed a Designated Official on Environmental Matters (DOEM). DOEM reviewed the collective environmental work of UN bodies and agencies in preparation for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992.
9. It is also significant to note that during this pre-UNCED period, UNEP dispersed approximately 30% of its resources through the environmental programmes of other UN system organizations. Furthermore, in the past, agencies joined hands in the preparation of the UN system-wide medium-term Environment Programme which served as a basis for inter-agency cooperation in the field of environment. It was implemented through the medium-term plan and programme budget document of all cooperating agencies.
10. UNCED, in adopting Agenda 21, reaffirmed UNEP's coordinating role, stating that, "The Governing Council should, within its mandate, continue to play its role with regard to policy guidance and

coordination in the field of the environment, taking into account the development perspective". UNEP should concentrate on "promoting international cooperation in the field of environment and recommending, as appropriate, policies to this end". This mandate was reaffirmed in the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21, adopted by the General Assembly in 1997. It stated that "the role of UNEP, as the principal UN body in the field of the environment, should be further enhanced. Taking into account its catalytic role, and in conformity with Agenda 21 and the Nairobi Declaration on the Role and Mandate of UNEP, adopted on 7 February 1997, UNEP is to be the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the UN system, and serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment".

11. In order to ensure effective cooperation and coordination within the UN system in the implementation of Agenda 21, the ACC established the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development (IACSD) in 1992. IACSD utilized a system of task managers for thematic areas, who took the lead in preparing reports to the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD). IACSD ceased to exist after the review of ACC in 2001 established the UN System Chief Executives Board (CEB) for Coordination and its High Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP).
12. In 1995, UNEP established the Inter-Agency Environment Management Group (IAEG), which evolved from the ECB and DOEM. IAEG was conceived as a mechanism to provide UNEP with an effective and strong coordinating role within the UN system on environmental matters. It held only two substantive meetings. In 1998, the Task Force on Environment and Human Settlements recommended that IAEG should be replaced by the EMG.
13. Additionally, in response to concerns regarding coordination, several UN cooperation frameworks exist in specific environment-related areas. They vary greatly in their scope, membership and time-frame. Examples include: UN-Water, UN-Energy and UN-Oceans (which fall loosely within the purview of HLCP), the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC), the Joint Liaison Group (of the 'Rio' MEAs), and the Ecosystem Conservation Group (ECG).

ii) Environment Management Group - Role and Mandate

14. The Secretary-General, pursuant to his 1997 report entitled 'Renewing the UN: a programme for reform' (A/51/950), established a Task Force on Environment and Human Settlements to prepare proposals on reforming and strengthening the UN activities in the fields of environment and human settlements. The Task Force, chaired by UNEP's Executive Director, was requested to review existing structures and arrangements through which environmental activities are carried out within the UN system, and to focus on the distinctive functions of policy, development of norms and standards, programme development and implementation and financing, as well as relationships amongst these functions. The report of the Task Force was presented to the Secretary-General in June 1998. He subsequently issued his report to the General Assembly on Environment and Human Settlements (A/53/463).
15. In his report, the Secretary-General put forward the Task Force's recommendation for improved inter-agency policy coherence and collaboration through the establishment of an EMG. The Secretary-General stated that EMG would adopt a problem solving, results-oriented approach that would enable UN bodies and their partners to share information, consult on proposed new initiatives and contribute to a planning framework and develop agreed priorities and their respective roles in the implementation of those priorities in order to achieve a more rational and cost-effective use of their resources. EMG would also provide a forum and a mechanism to enhance complementarities between the analytical and normative activities of UNEP with the operational role of UNDP. As such, EMG would follow the "issue management" approach outlined by the Secretary-General in his reform report. The reports of the EMG could be made available to relevant inter-governmental bodies to enhance inter-governmental policy coherence.
16. The Task Force proposed that the most important goal of the EMG should be to achieve effective coordination and joint action in key areas of the environment and human settlements concern; assist intergovernmental bodies in the area of environment and human settlements, in particular UNEP Governing Council and the Commission on Human Settlements, in preparation of coordinated inputs to intergovernmental fora, notably the CSD. EMG should establish time-bound task forces or working groups covering clusters of issues in which representatives of the main institutions involved in a particular issue can work together quickly to solve important problems. Furthermore, EMG should include convention

secretariats among its participants when needed and should act to ensure that there are appropriate linkages among activities that occur under conventions and relevant activities elsewhere in the international system.

17. The General Assembly, in its resolution 53/242, expressed support for the establishment of EMG and requested the Secretary-General to develop, in consultation with the Member States and the ACC, the mandate, terms of reference, appropriate criteria for membership, and flexible and cost-effective working methods for the EMG. After a process of consultation within IACSD, the terms of reference for EMG were endorsed by ACC at its first Regular Session of 2000.
18. Key points regarding EMG's mandate, objectives, membership, structure and secretariat, as contained in the terms of reference include:

The EMG *mandate* is: (a) to provide a UN response, and facilitate joint action in finding solutions to issues of environment and human settlements; and (b) to promote inter-linkages and information exchange, contribute to synergy and complementarity between the activities of its members and add value to existing inter-agency cooperation.

The EMG *objectives* are: (a) to identify, address and resolve collectively specific problems through securing the collaboration of its members; and (b) to provide a forum for sharing information on new and emerging issues and deciding collectively the most effective approach to deal with them.

The EMG *membership* will consist of all the specialized agencies, programmes and organs of the UN system and all the secretariats of MEAs. Representatives of civil society and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) may participate by invitation of the Chair.

The EMG *structure* will have a senior-level decision-making body chaired by UNEP's Executive Director, and ad hoc issue-management groups which will be time-bound.

The EMG *secretariat* will be provided by UNEP.

19. The EMG started functioning in January 2001. A small EMG secretariat was established in Geneva in June 2003. The EMG held ten meetings during 2001-05. The EMG also established issue-management groups for harmonization of reporting on biodiversity-related conventions, sustainable procurement, environmental aspects of water and sanitation, and capacity building in the areas of biodiversity and chemicals.

iii) International Environmental Governance process

20. Against the backdrop of the preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), the UNEP Governing Council, through an Open-ended Intergovernmental Group of Ministers or Their Representatives (IGM), undertook a comprehensive policy-oriented assessment of existing institutional weaknesses as well as future needs and options for strengthened international environmental governance (IEG). Among the main issues addressed was enhanced coordination across the UN system - specifically the role of the EMG. IGM concluded that for UNEP's "Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum to effectively play its policy role, it requires an instrument at the inter-agency level to enhance policy coordination across the environmental activities of the UN system. The EMG is such an instrument and should be charged with reporting annually to the Forum ... as well as on specific issues arising from the work of the UN system in the environmental area on which the Forum could make recommendations on the work of the EMG".
21. The Johannesburg Programme of Implementation (JPOI), adopted by WSSD in 2002, stressed the need for international institutions both within and outside the UN system to enhance, within their mandates, their cooperative efforts to promote effective and collective support to the implementation of Agenda 21 at all levels; and enhance the effectiveness and coordination of international institutions to implement Agenda 21, the outcomes of WSSD, relevant sustainable development aspects of the Millennium Declaration, the Monterrey Consensus and the fourth WTO ministerial meeting.
22. The JPOI goes on to request the Secretary-General, utilizing the CEB, including through informal collaborative efforts, to further promote system-wide inter-agency cooperation and coordination on sustainable development, to take appropriate measures to facilitate exchange of information, and to continue to keep the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the CSD informed of actions being taken to implement Agenda 21. The JPOI also stressed that the strengthening of the international

institutional framework for sustainable development is an evolutionary process. It is necessary to keep under review relevant arrangements; identify gaps; eliminate duplication of functions; and continue to strive for greater integration, efficiency and coordination of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development aiming at the implementation of Agenda 21. It also called on the international community to fully implement the IEG outcomes adopted by UNEP's Governing Council at its seventh special session.

23. Part of the IEG package was the development of the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building (BSP), which was presented to UNEP's Governing Council at its twenty-third session in February 2005. It stipulated that the BSP "should support improved inter-agency coordination and cooperation", and that as part of its approach "work must be coordinated, linked with efforts already in progress and integrated with other sustainable development initiatives using existing coordinating mechanisms, such as the EMG, the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) and the resident coordinator system". The BSP also states that "UNEP should work to achieve improved and enhanced communication, cooperation, coordination and synergies with other UN organizations, international financial institutions, regional development banks, MEA secretariats, civil society and relevant stakeholders, in order to ensure optimum use of limited financial and human resources, strengthen regional and country level activities and provide a platform for multilateral approaches and consistency".

III: Assessment of the performance of EMG

(i) Progress made by EMG

24. In the course of its initial years of operation, EMG has, with a limited amount of resources, made progress in a few specific areas, most notably harmonization of reporting on biodiversity-related issues and capacity-building in the field of chemicals management.
25. With regard to the former, many fora, including CSD, WSSD and UNEP's Governing Council have recognized that the reporting requirements of the many MEAs are imposing a burden on Governments. It was decided that streamlining the requests for national reporting in an efficient and coordinated manner would help all the States Parties. An issue-management group was established under UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC) to consider the issue. UNEP initiated pilot projects in four countries to test the possibilities of harmonized reporting. The issue-management group presented its final report in December 2003, recommending further liaison meetings between secretariats, national-level approaches and collaborative workshops. EMG decided that its own members should implement the recommendations of the report and report back to the Group in 2005. The report on harmonization of reporting on biodiversity-related issues, after three years of work on what had seemed to be a relatively simple issue, revealed the difficulties in achieving harmonized reporting and brought clarity in terms of identifying the obstacles.
26. A second notable success was the work of the issue-management group on capacity-building for chemicals management. A situation and needs analysis, prepared for EMG by the UN Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) in co-operation with IOMC, provided an overview of the existing policy framework, activities and coordinating arrangements in the area of chemicals management capacity-building in the UN system. The report contributed to international dialogue to explore opportunities to enhance information exchange and co-ordination in the area of chemicals management capacity-building and to identify possible areas in which the EMG might provide value-added. The report was made available and considered by EMG, the High-Level Open-Ended Intergovernmental Working Group to develop an intergovernmental strategic plan for technology support and capacity building, and by IOMC during its discussions to develop a strategy for chemical management capacity-building. It was also submitted to PrepCom 2 for the development of a Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) which took place in October 2004.

(ii) Main conclusions of the consultant's independent evaluation report

27. In 2004 the UNEP Executive Director/EMG Chair commissioned an independent evaluation of the work of the EMG since its inception in order to provide a basis for reviewing its procedures and modalities and identifying measures for strengthening its working arrangements. In February 2005 the results of that independent evaluation were presented to the 23rd session of the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum in Nairobi.

28. While generally confirming that the concept of the EMG is both necessary and sound as it is the only mechanism that can provide a neutral platform for bringing together all the key agencies and stakeholders, there were also growing concerns about the ability of the EMG to fulfill its original mandate. Key concerns include:

- EMG's Secretariat and work has developed much more slowly than desired.
- EMG is largely perceived as a support body for UNEP. Its meetings have not been very focused and have been dominated by a UNEP-specific agenda.
- EMG's relationship to other inter-agency bodies is unclear and risks duplication. It has even supplanted other useful bodies such as the Ecosystem Conservation Group (ECG).
- EMG attendance has been poor with representation at a lower level than originally designed.
- EMG needs to provide more value-added with specific benefits for its members to ensure their full commitment and participation.
- EMG has had a very limited impact on information exchange.
- EMG now needs to refocus more on integrating environmental concerns in the work of all relevant bodies, including at the regional level.

IV: Needs for coordination within the international environmental agenda

29. The Outcome Document adopted by global leaders at the 2005 World Summit in New York in September 2005 made specific recommendations with regard to UN system-wide coherence, based on the recognition that the UN brings together a unique wealth of expertise and resources. The Outcome Document points to the extensive experience and expertise of the various development-related organizations, agencies, funds and programmes of the UN system in their diverse and complementary fields of activity and their important contributions to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the other development objectives established by various UN conferences.

30. The Outcome Document stipulates the need for stronger system-wide policy coherence by strengthening linkages between the UN's normative work and its operational activities and the need to ensure that the main horizontal policy themes, such as sustainable development, human rights and gender, are taken into account in decision-making throughout the UN. The Outcome Document specifically invites the Secretary-General to "launch work to further strengthen the management and coordination of UN operational activities", calling for such work to be focused on ensuring the UN maximizes its contribution to achieving internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs, including proposals for "more tightly managed entities" in the fields of the environment, humanitarian assistance and development.

31. The Document goes on to make specific recommendation with regard to environmental activities, "Recognizing the need for more efficient environmental activities in the UN system, with enhanced coordination, improved policy advice and guidance, strengthened scientific knowledge, assessment and cooperation, better treaty compliance, while respecting the legal autonomy of the treaties, and better integration of environmental activities in the broader sustainable development framework at the operational level, including through capacity-building". World leaders agreed to explore the possibility of a more coherent institutional framework to address this need, including a more integrated structure, building on existing institutions and internationally agreed instruments, as well as the treaty bodies and the specialized agencies.

32. In order to respond to this call, the Secretary-General has announced that he is commissioning a small panel of eminent and experienced international figures to develop concrete and comprehensive analysis and recommendations on UN system-wide coherence in the fields of humanitarian assistance, environmental activities and development. The Panel will be supported by a small Secretariat, with additional research and analytical support from within and outside the UN system. The Panel's study will encompass both organizational and funding issues ranging from the duplication and overlap of work across UN agencies and programmes to prospects for joint, multi-year funding and programming arrangements. The Panel will explore ways of making better use of the synergies between the normative and analytical institutions of the UN and operational agencies. It will also assess how the UN system can best exercise its comparative advantages with its international partners, including the Bretton Woods Institutions, the European Commission and other regional actors, donors, civil society and the private sector.

33. The environment component of the Panel's study will particularly need to address two key issues: how to achieve more comprehensive and coherent implementation, monitoring and management of the growing

range of MEAs; and how to achieve better integration of the crucial environmental aspects of sustainable development in UN country-level activities, especially on capacity-building and technology support.

34. The General Assembly will also be launching informal consultations on the institutional framework on environment in early 2006. The UNEP Governing Council will also continue its consideration of IEG issues during its Ninth special session/Global Ministerial Environment Forum, which will be held from 7-9 February 2005 in Dubai.
35. These reform initiatives naturally have a direct bearing on the work and future of EMG. The outcome of the S-G's high-level panel's study will certainly have implications for EMG's role and mandate, and its links with other UN coordinating mechanisms. The task entrusted to the Panel also presents an important opportunity for EMG, opening the possibility of the EMG members presenting the panel with a set of coordinated observations and recommendations with regard to enhancing system-wide coherence in the field of the environment. This proposed activity for EMG will be discussed further in the following section.

V: Proposals for the future of EMG: How best to revitalize and strengthen the EMG?

36. Member States have placed the onus on the UN to significantly improve system-wide coherence in the field of the environment. EMG has the potential to fill the void in terms of coordination if it is able to address the key challenges, and if its members can commit to its revitalization in a concerted and targeted manner. This section both (i) poses questions that the Forum will need to openly discuss and (ii) puts forward a number of opportunities that EMG could embrace as it seeks to fulfill the objectives and functions as originally conceived.

(i) EMG's Terms of Reference – do they need to be revisited?

37. EMG's terms of reference, which were agreed through a process of inter-agency consultations, and were input to the inter-governmental level, may be considered to be broad enough in nature to allow for a strategic reorientation or refocusing on specific elements or functions. This implies a clarification of/expansion on the specifics of the terms of reference, rather than a renegotiation of the broad functions. Any such clarifications/expansions should obviously take into account the implications of reform initiatives that are unfolding.

(ii) Working Methods – is issue-management a useful approach?

38. One such reorientation/clarification could be considered with regard to EMG's working methods, including the focus on the issue-management approach. The issue-management approach can broadly be considered to have been useful; particularly considering the areas in which EMG has proved to have had some success in the past, namely harmonization of biodiversity-related reporting and capacity-building in the field of chemical's management.
39. There continue to be specific issues on the environment agenda that are neglected in terms of coordination, with a sub-optimal division of labour and an inefficient use of limited resources, and significant areas of duplication. Being very selective and steering clear of areas that are addressed elsewhere, EMG should build on examples of its successful issue-management groups, and use those as models for future issue-area collaboration. However, in this connection, it would be necessary to strengthen the EMG Secretariat so that it can effectively service such issue-management groups; in much the same fashion as UNDG services UNDG's substantive working groups, rather than leaving the logistical aspects unclear. It would also be essential for the Secretariat to provide the necessary substantive support to these initiatives.
40. In considering issue areas that merit/require attention, it may be useful to lend priority to the environmental issues that were specifically addressed in MDG 7 on environmental sustainability and in the 2005 Summit Outcome Document.
41. Other issues that have surfaced in the course of the consultations that were undertaken in preparation for the EMG Forum include: i) health and environment, including with regard to vulnerable groups such as children, and ii) reviving the Ecosystem Conservation Group (UNEP, FAO, UNESCO, IUCN and WWF), which was widely deemed to have been a useful inter-agency mechanism and which had initially been considered as a model for the issue-management groups originally envisaged for EMG.

(iii) Working Methods – beyond issue-management: broader policy coherence

42. In addressing the future of EMG, members may consider that the work of the EMG in the future should go beyond the issue-management approach as the sole or even main functional modality. It is important that EMG members should be able to come together to obtain a clearer sense of the evolution of the broader environmental agenda. It would include contributing to broad environmental policy development in areas such as: integrating environmental issues into development planning at the country-level (see next section on links with UNDG), the poverty and environment nexus, and emerging issues such as the linkages between the environment, development and humanitarian agendas of the UN, as well as ensuring that the planned programme activities of the members can be discussed and benefit from a coherent and strategic approach.
43. These issues go to the heart of the question of how EMG can better contribute to system-wide coherence, coordination and cooperation on environment. In this context, EMG should actively consider embracing the opportunity to contribute to the work of the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on System-Wide Coherence.
44. One aspect of this system-wide coherence, which was pinpointed by UNEP's IEG process, is rationalizing policy that emanates from different inter-governmental fora, and coordinating policy proposals that are put to such inter-governmental fora. In this regard, it is notable that the IEG process concluded that "for the Global Ministerial Environment Forum to effectively play its policy role, it requires an instrument at the inter-agency level to enhance policy coordination across the environmental activities of the UN system. The EMG is such an instrument and should be charged with reporting annually to the Forum, taking into account the provisions of General Assembly resolution 54/217, as well as on specific issues arising from the work of the UN system in the environmental area on which the Forum could make recommendations (on the work of the EMG). Similar relationships should be established with the Governing Bodies of the members of the EMG".
45. Another important aspect of policy coherence is the establishment of an effective system of information exchange, which would be of great potential benefit to agencies, the EMG secretariat and the governing bodies of the agencies. Information exchange was originally identified as a core function of EMG, but one which EMG has yet to comprehensively address. It is envisaged that an effective system of information exchange would allow EMG members to check their proposed programmes, projects and activities with those of other agencies to avoid duplication and explore the potential for joint action and synergy. The EMG secretariat could explore potentials for synergy and joint action, including the use of focused web-management as a diagnostic tool to avoid duplication and promote synergy. The information would be useful to the governing bodies of the agencies and to financial contributors to the UN system.
46. In addressing both this broader policy and more specific programme (issue management) approach for EMG, the Forum will need to brainstorm on what are the priority issues and components for developing and implementing EMG short and longer-term strategic plans.

(iv) Working Methods – How can EMG's operational links with other relevant UN inter-agency and issue-based coordination mechanisms be improved?

47. To enhance its effectiveness, EMG must establish solid working relationships with other relevant inter-agency mechanisms and draw from and/or contribute to their work as appropriate. The involvement of the EMG Director in the relevant work of such inter-agency mechanisms will be important in this regard. The two most obvious links for EMG are with (i) CEB/HLCP and with (ii) UNDG.
48. CEB and HLCP: EMG members should consider exploring a mechanism that would allow for EMG members to flag emerging environmental issues, or those requiring priority attention to CEB through HLCP. In this regard, it is significant to note that HLCP, in defining its work programme for the coming biennium has identified sustainability (environmental valuation and economic compensation) as one of its four priority areas. It will also be important for the EMG Secretariat to monitor and be involved in (as appropriate) the work of the inter-agency mechanisms that loosely fall within the purview of HLCP, such as UN-Water, UN-Oceans and UN-Energy.
49. UNDG: The interrelationship between EMG and UNDG has already been heralded as an important one. It was originally conceived in the Task Force's report that EMG would provide a forum and a mechanism to enhance complementarities between the analytical and normative activities of UNEP with the operational

role of UNDP. The report on the state of IEG submitted to WSSD also recommended that measures be taken to establish linkages between UNDG and EMG. EMG has even been seen as a potential environmental counter-part to UNDG, with recommendations for the establishment of UN Environment Groups to complement UNDG's groups. UNEP and UNDP will actively collaborate in UNDG through a joint chair arrangement on the environment, **which can give credibility to the EMG**. EMG potentially has an important role to play in addressing the environmental dimensions of a number of UNDG's working groups, including on: capacity-development, non-resident agencies, strengthening the resident coordinator system and a new group that is being constituted on environmental sustainability.

(v) Membership – How best to engender ownership and deliver returns on investment to members?

50. Membership: EMG is set-up as a UN system-wide mechanism, but one that allows for the inclusions of views of non-UN partners through its issue-management groups. This approach is deemed to be a valuable one, if EMG can strategically draw on non-UN views when relevant to specific substantive issues being addressed.
51. Level of attendance: it is important for EMG's profile and effectiveness, and as a clear sign of commitment, that members are represented at a senior-level in meetings of EMG.
52. Ownership: A sense of ownership among members can best be achieved if members feel that they are getting significant returns on their investment of human and financial resources. Discussing and agreeing on the way forward for EMG will be an essential first step in building confidence among its members, allowing for the discussion of important proposals such as strengthening EMG's interactions with inter-governmental bodies, especially those of its members. The efficient functioning of the EMG requires a clear relation with inter-governmental processes, while retaining its inter-agency nature, that include a clearly-defined reporting relationship with the Global Ministerial Environment Forum, CSD, and other forums in the UN system.
53. Another method of enhancing buy-in from EMG members, and ensuring that it is not perceived as a 'UNEP' mechanism, is instituting an EMG Vice-Chair that will be chosen, on a rotational basis, from the membership.

(vi) Support structure–Efficacy and sufficiency of Secretariat arrangements

54. The Forum will need to have an open discussion on what EMG administrative and financial resources are needed to fulfill its mandate as the restructured Secretariat evolves.
55. **The EMG Secretariat is located in Geneva**, clearly, a capable and effective Secretariat is critical to the work of the EMG. This strategic consideration must be borne in mind in reviewing the structural set-up of the EMG Secretariat. The EMG Secretariat should be positioned so that it can benefit from maximum institutional support and synergies. The Secretariat currently has two professional staff seconded by UNEP at its own cost. In his letter of invitation to the High-Level Forum the chair of the EMG invited members to provide him with indications of how they might wish to support the EMG. Shared responsibility in the running and management of the Secretariat will be an important mark of commitment by the membership, including through the secondment of staff. The High-Level Forum is invited to exchange views on the nature and scope of Secretariat arrangements including options for a broad-based EMG presence (UN capitals, regional, national).
56. The expectation of predictability and sustainability in the financing of the EMG in UNGA 53/242 has yet to be realized and this should be considered in the context of the current zero growth provision in the UN's regular budget. An EMG Trust Fund established three years ago only attracted a contribution of \$302,115 from the Government of Switzerland. The development cooperation partners, despite statements of support, have yet to respond to the resource needs of EMG. Securing adequate means for implementation of the agreed work-plan of EMG has been and remains a precondition for success and should be addressed unambiguously.

VI: Conclusion

57. EMG needs to start delivering results, gaining the confidence of its members as a useful tool to enhance the execution of their environment-related activities, and thus establish its profile within and outside the UN

system. Currently, the expectations of EMG are quite diverse and varied. The Forum should utilize this opportunity to develop a clear consensus on how it wishes the EMG to function in the future.

58. In this context, the Forum should agree on what it expects the EMG to do in the forthcoming biennium, with clear indications of benchmarks and resource implications, and commitment and shared responsibilities. EMG should strive for senior-level participation by member institutions, transparency in operations, adequate resources to support the functioning of the EMG, shared responsibility in the governance and running of the Secretariat, and financial support, particularly from the development cooperation partners for specific activities, including a coordinated approach to issues or initiatives which will help demonstrate system-wide coherence and cooperation.
59. With proper commitment, EMG members can work together to revitalize EMG, allowing it to assist all its members in addressing their environment activities within a coherent and effective UN system.